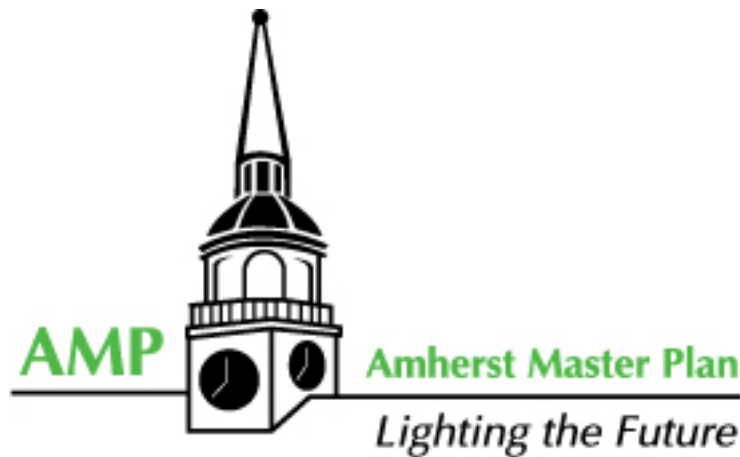


# AMP: AMHERST MASTER PLAN LIGHTING THE FUTURE



## HOUSING

### WANT: Voice of Amherst <sup>1</sup>:

- *Preserve the existing residential nature of Amherst characterized by the village, rural landscape, New England colonial architecture and small town feel*
- *Reduce residential development*
- *Improve aesthetics in residential developments*
- *Preserve current separation of residential and commercial uses*
- *Explore ways of providing affordable housing, especially for fixed income elderly and young adults*
- *Maintain Amherst Village as a mixed use limited commercial rural village*

### HAVE: Existing Conditions<sup>2</sup>:

- If Amherst grows like it has in the past it will have over 16,000 residents by 2020 and 18,000 residents by 2030. There are currently about 13,600 residents.
- There are about 2,500 vacant developable acres zoned for residential development.
- There are about 4,000 housing units in Amherst. Almost 70% of these have been built since 1970.
- The number of new residential building permits has decreased in recent years to an average of about 55 from the average of about 100 in the mid-1990s.
- The average sales price for homes in Amherst in 2006 was \$402,827.
- About 80% of Amherst households could not afford the average sales price.
- One and 2 bedroom homes have positive fiscal impacts on the town budget, while 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes have negative fiscal impacts (that is, they cost the town more in services than they contribute to property tax revenues).

<sup>1</sup> Resident input, based on various visioning exercises.

<sup>2</sup> Consultant documentation, based on review of previous studies, interviews, meetings, site visits.

## **AMP: AMHERST MASTER PLAN LIGHTING THE FUTURE**

### **MAIN ISSUES: Opportunities & Challenges:**

- Recently there has been a shift to smaller 2 bedroom homes, some in two-unit condominium structures, developed under the Planned Residential District provisions of the Amherst Zoning Ordinance.
- Smaller 1 and 2 bedroom units will be sought by young adults just starting families and by empty nesters and retirees. These are life cycle categories expected to grow in the future indicating growing markets for smaller housing units.
- The availability of smaller less expensive housing units may help to keep some young adults in Amherst, especially those in the 20 to 29 year old category, many of whom leave town.
- Condominium units are growing in popularity. Sales in all categories of homes slowed down between 2005 and 2006 in all towns in the Nashua metropolitan area, except condominium units in Amherst, which increased.
- Parkhurst Place on Veteran Road in Amherst is the only facility of its kind in New Hampshire, providing 21 subsidized rental units and 21 market-rate rental units for elderly residents. There will be markets and opportunities to create more facilities of this type to add to the stock of affordable housing in Amherst.
- Two additional means of providing affordable housing are to establish a fund for purchase of land for such housing, and/or to donate town-owned land for such housing. Establishing a land trust with town funds that could be supplemented with private donations is another means of providing money to purchase land for affordable housing. Land trusts can become self-sustaining through sale of land to developers. For affordable housing it is most useful to seek out and encourage non-profit developers. Smaller-unit more affordable housing needs to be developed on tracts of land large enough to support a common septic system to bring the per-unit cost of wastewater disposal down to affordable limits, and depending on location, a common water supply system may need to be created to serve all homes in a development.